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INTERIOR OF THE COUNTY COURT CHAMBER,  
TORONTO, CANADA.

BY MORGAN MARTIN RENNER, ARCHITECT, NEW YORK.



HIS beautiful room has three orders of architecture in its interior design. The lower is composite, the second Ionic, and the upper order is Corinthian. The style of architecture is Italian Renaissance, and of American development, and can only be called American Renaissance by historians of future decades.

The author says: "When I wish to design in Italian Renaissance architecture, I become in spirit an Italian, by converting myself into an Italian scholar in the architecture of the different ages, which I particularly wish to develop, and as an Italian architect living in the nineteenth century on the American continent, enjoying all the privileges of this scientific and artistic age, I necessarily produce nineteenth century Italian architecture."

Italy, even during the middle ages, never entirely lost the traces of ancient tradition, towards which her very origin and her genius ever led her, although at certain periods she had only recognized this tradition through a Byzantine medium.

The Italians had only to search among their ruins in order to bring the work of their ancestors once more to light. Italy became the focus and artistic center of the great artistic movement, usually called the Renaissance, which by extending its influence over other nations, was to change the face of art.

This complete and fruitful movement belongs to the general history of the fine arts. The immortal phalanx of great Italian artists of the sixteenth century, who determined the definitive direction of Western taste towards a rejuvenescent ideal still more varied and full of life than the ancient art from whence it emanated, raised the decorative arts to the utmost, carrying into them that breadth of ideas and extent of knowledge on every subject which these masters owed to their thorough artistic education. Each of them being at once a painter, architect, sculptor, frequently an engineer, mechanician, engraver and musician, and always well read in general literature, found all his resources and means of execution in himself.

The science of design being perfected by contact with the finest models, and freed from the simplicity and inexperience of the middle ages, favored in composition of this period a large introduction of the human figure, which by its presence determined the proportions of the surrounding objects.

Ornament from this time was frequently united whilst remaining subordinate, to the plastic arts, which had now reached their greatest perfection, and by which it was carried forward in the path of progress.

The Italians then during the golden age rendered decoration a superior and universal art. Thus we have the complete foundation and definite development of the style of renaissance. Mr. Renner's architecture and ornamentation is of broad and powerful character, although quite distinct from that of his contemporaries. It is a decided turn towards the realistic, but without detracting from the antique. He has already established some precedent in his profession along these lines, although the idea conveyed in his design is to represent the character of the Canadian people, who are thorough in their conceptions, and not like the other American people who are not so definite in their thoughts. The lower order and walls of this chamber of justice in the Toronto Court House are of the dark shade of Numidian marble from Western Algeria. This marble forms an Indian red hue, varying from a pink to a maroon. The large wall panels are formed by large mirrors and occasionally by a design in tapestry. The egg and dart mouldings around these panels are picked out with gold leaf.

The columns in the second or Ionic order are of Canadian granite, polished. The caryatides, wall and cornice of this order is of lighter pink or flesh colored Numidian marble. The egg and dart mouldings in this cornice are picked out with silver leaf, the window trim is of mahogany, and the decorated mouldings around the paintings and panels are picked out with gold leaf.

The canopy over the judge's platform is of the dark shade of Numidian marble, and the wall back of same is of the lighter shade of the same marble.

The Corinthian columns and caryatides of the third and top order are of Mexican pink and Oriental or Egyptian onyx, which are scarcely darker than flesh color, with a slight yellow tone. The foliage of the capitals, also the drapery and hair of the caryatides, are picked out and bronzed with gold leaf. The wall and paneling back of this order is of the lighter shade of Connemara green marble from Ireland. This marble is of a half-toned green, yellow shade.

The architecture and cornice of the top order are of Italian Sienna marble.

The ground work of the ceiling, except where paintings occur, is of a rich cream color, with the mouldings picked out with gold and silver leaf, and described in prime colors, forming a body of a harmonizing tone. The plastic work and decorative features are in half tones, red and blue grey effects predominating.

The blank space or panel left between the caryatides of the second order are for venerable ex-judges portraits. The panel in relief above same, and in the third order, is of Numidian marble with the border about same picked out in gold leaf. The egg and dart mouldings in the cornice, third or Corinthian order, are picked out in silver leaf, and the grotesques within these panels are picked out with bright Italian red; frame line around paintings under the arches of the cornice, or in the third order, is of gold. These paintings will be in colors true to nature.

The large painting in the center of the ceiling is of a mother with several children or cupids resting on the clouds; her hair is floating underneath her, while her wraps are resting over her right shoulder and body. This center group is surrounded by a wreath of flying cupids, and others floating on clouds. The ground of this painting, representing the sky, is an airy grey, blending off to ultra-marine blue, forming an apparently arched sky, and this through the clouds far distant.

The design of the floor is made up of a huge border with large panels within, which go to make up one great panel. The interior of each panel and of border is composed largely of a dark yellow tile of an orange shade. These larger tile go together with the smaller tile of an orange maroon color, almost Indian red. The border of these panels are formed of a light blue tile of the design of an egg and dart moulding, shaded with grey or darker hue to make up the design. The outside line of each panel and of the whole is of maroon tiles.

The doors of the chamber or court rooms are of native walnut, trimmed or decorated with bronze bolt heads and washers, and bronzed hardware. The door trim is of mahogany. The furniture throughout including judge's desk is of walnut; the witness stands are spiral bronzed stairs towering up by the side of judge's desk and in the bend of the curved front of judge's platform.

This entire design is intended to convey the idea of brighter days, and more upright judgments in the courts above, and to suggest warning of a more corrupt state of proceedings here below.

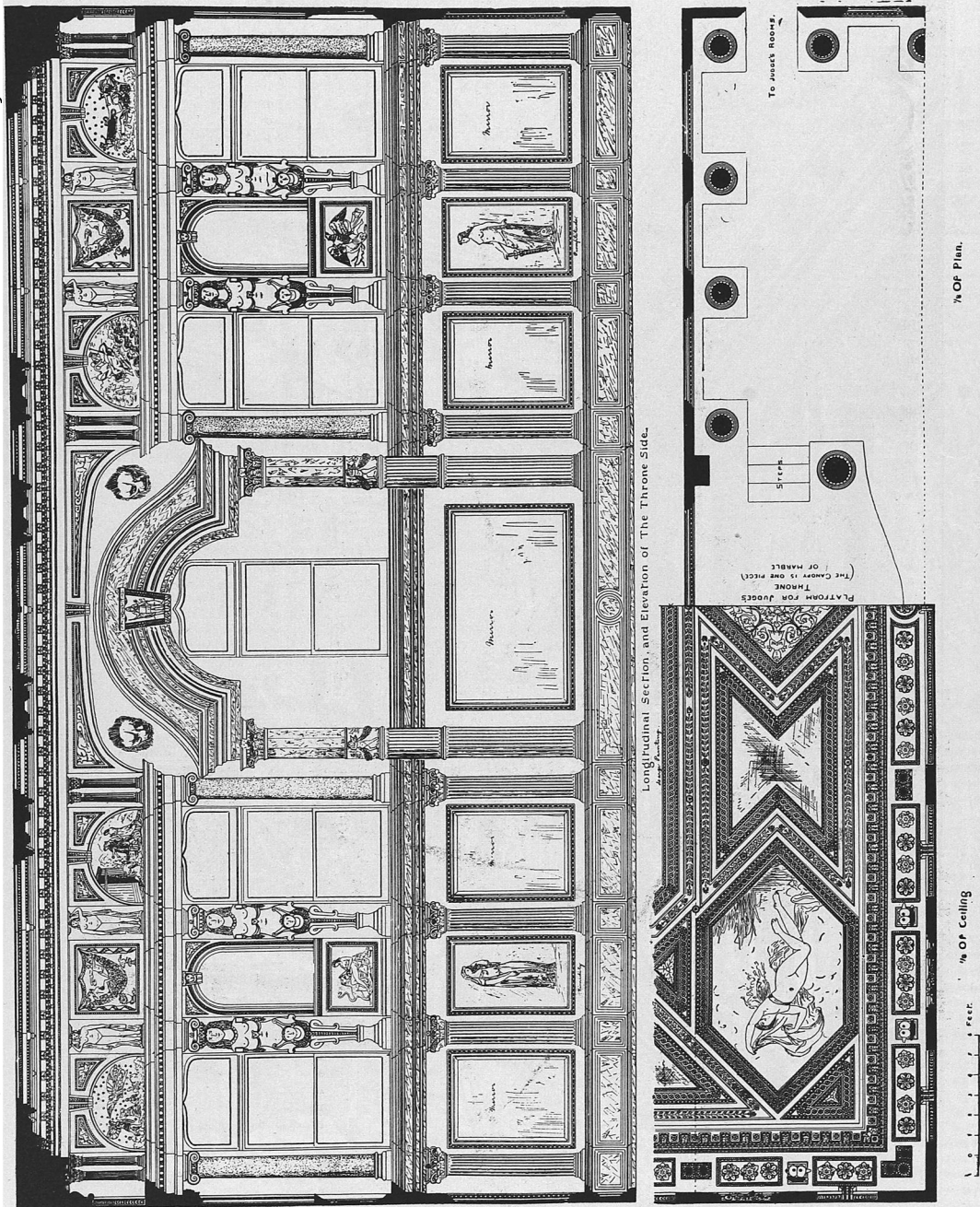
The light effect of the upper part of this room makes the room much lighter than it would otherwise be. The upper part of this design represents purity and the sublime.

The dark furniture forms a good background for the people in the court. The judge sits a considerable distance from the mirror behind him, and the people below see nothing therein but a repetition of this magnificent palace of justice. The first order is doubled by the mirrors as it is reflected, and impresses all of those within the court room with its importance.

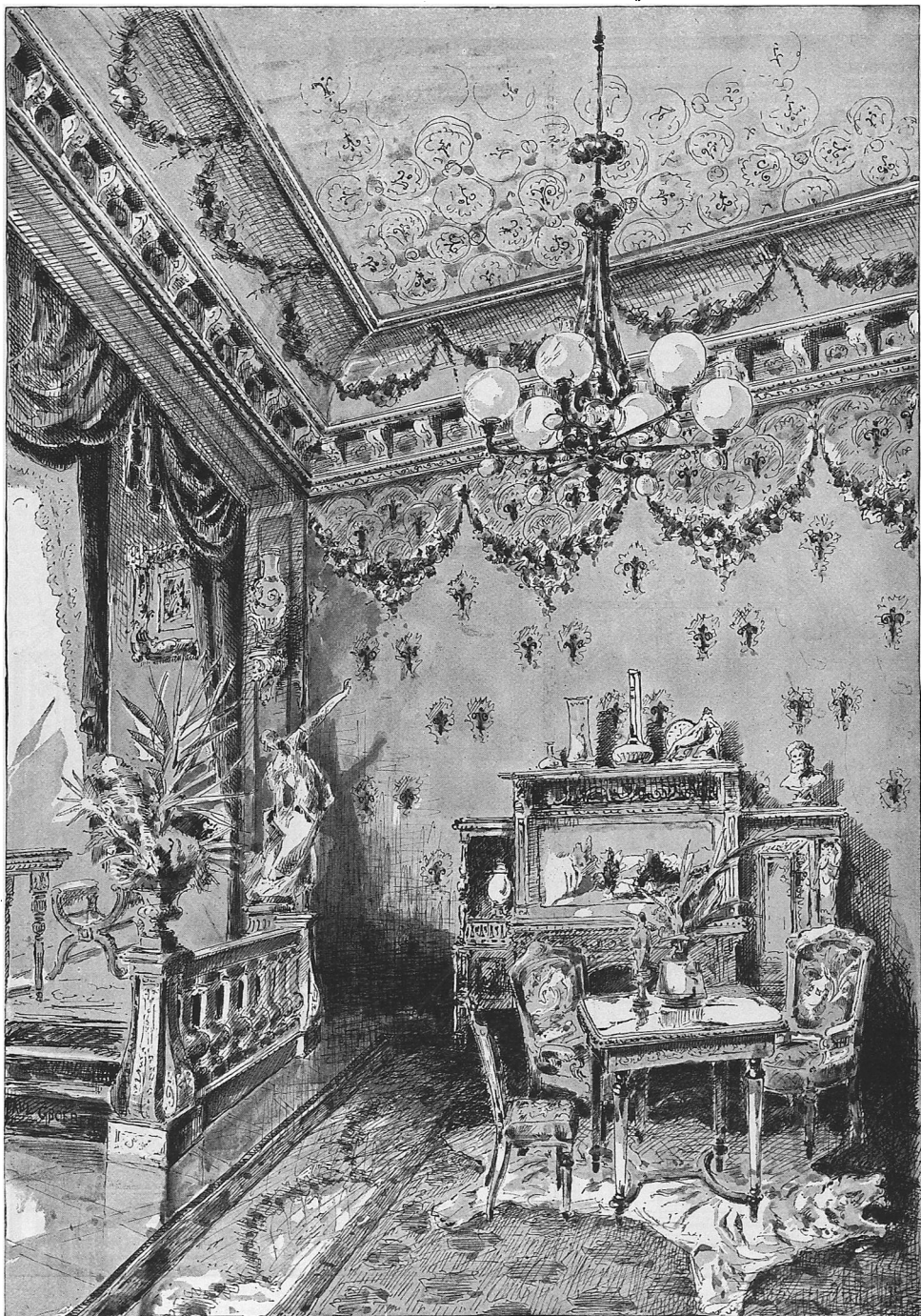
It will be admitted that the proportions of the apartment are dignified and beautiful, and that the architect has handled the juxtaposition of the various Greek styles in a manner that emphasizes their individual beauty.

The ornamentation is not too redundant for the size and character of the building, and indeed, such a style of ornament applied to the exterior of a building would be extremely appropriate.

The impress of original power is stamped on features not necessarily new, which imparts to them distinctive life and character: a stamp of individuality without any appearance of straining after novelty.



DECORATION OF THE COUNTY COURT ROOM IN THE NEW COURT HOUSE, TORONTO, CANADA. BY MORGAN MARTIN BENNER, ARCHITECT, NEW YORK.



DRAWING-ROOM DECORATED WITH H. BARTHOLOMAE & CO.'S WALL-PAPER.